

is a residential area on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation located close to the county's eastern boundary on Highway 212. Scattered residential development outside of existing communities occurs predominantly along major travel routes and waterways. With the exception of the vacant historic town of Corinth (west of Hardin along Fly Creek), there are no residential subdivisions of any significant concentration in the county. With the exception of some smaller parcels along the Big Horn River where demand is higher for recreational properties, and to a lesser extent on the Tongue River Reservoir, the county area outside of communities is almost exclusively comprised of large parcels of 160 acres or greater. Since 2002 in the planning area has had only a handful of new additional lots created.

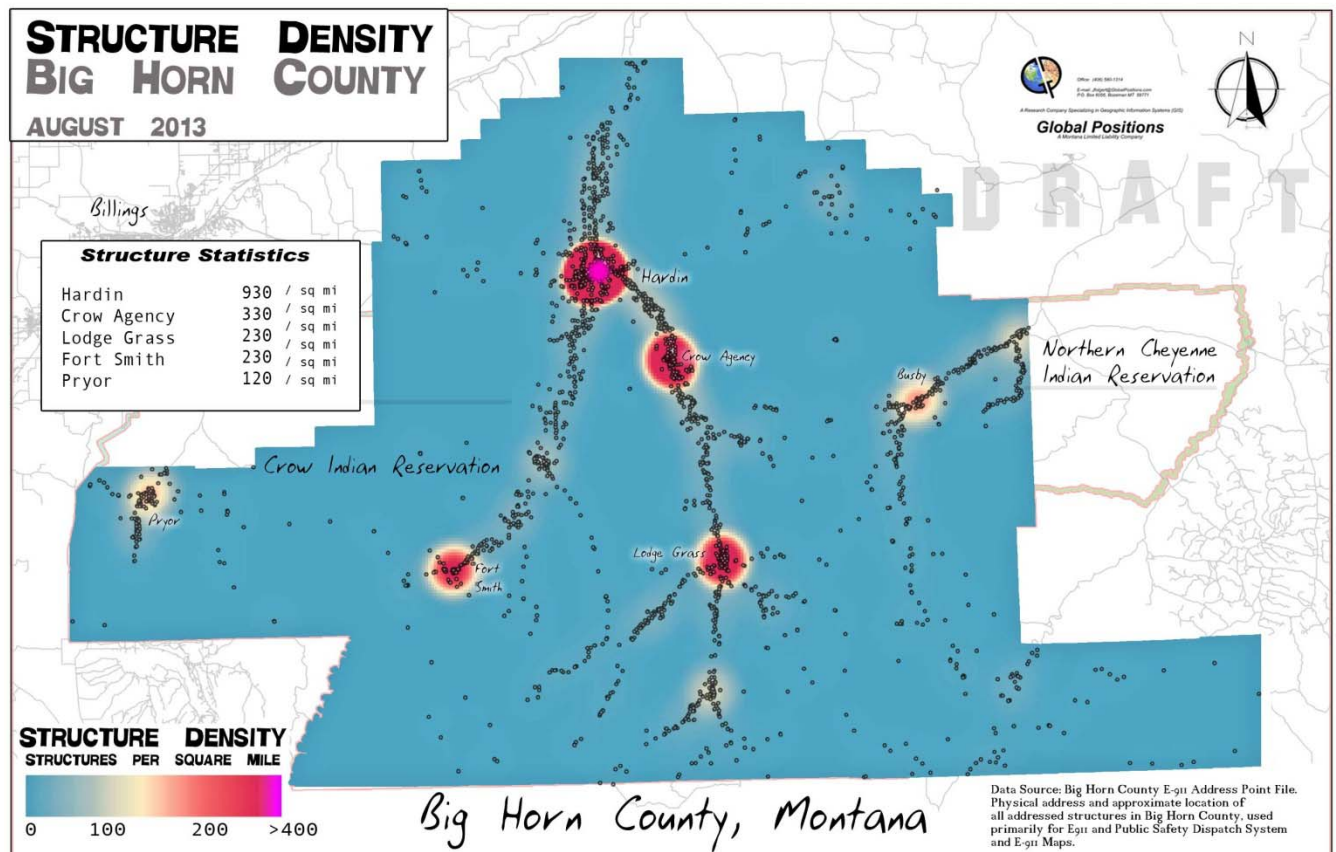


Figure 8: Structure Density in Big Horn County

Map produced by Global Positions for the 2013 Big Horn County Growth Policy

Nearly half of the county includes significant coal deposits. Big Horn County includes four of the seven active coal mines in Montana, more than any other county in the state. The Apsalooka Mine in the Rosebud Mountains east of Hardin, and Spring Creek and East and West Decker Mines in the Wolf Mountains near Tongue River Reservoir in the southeast corner of the county, are all surface mines. More coal development could be possible in the future. On June 20, 2013, Crow Tribal Chairman Darrin Old Coyote announced that the Bureau of Indian Affairs approved a leasing agreement between the Crow Tribe and Cloud Peak Energy. The deal is approximated to encompass 1.4 billion tons of coal. (Big Horn County News, June 27, 2013)

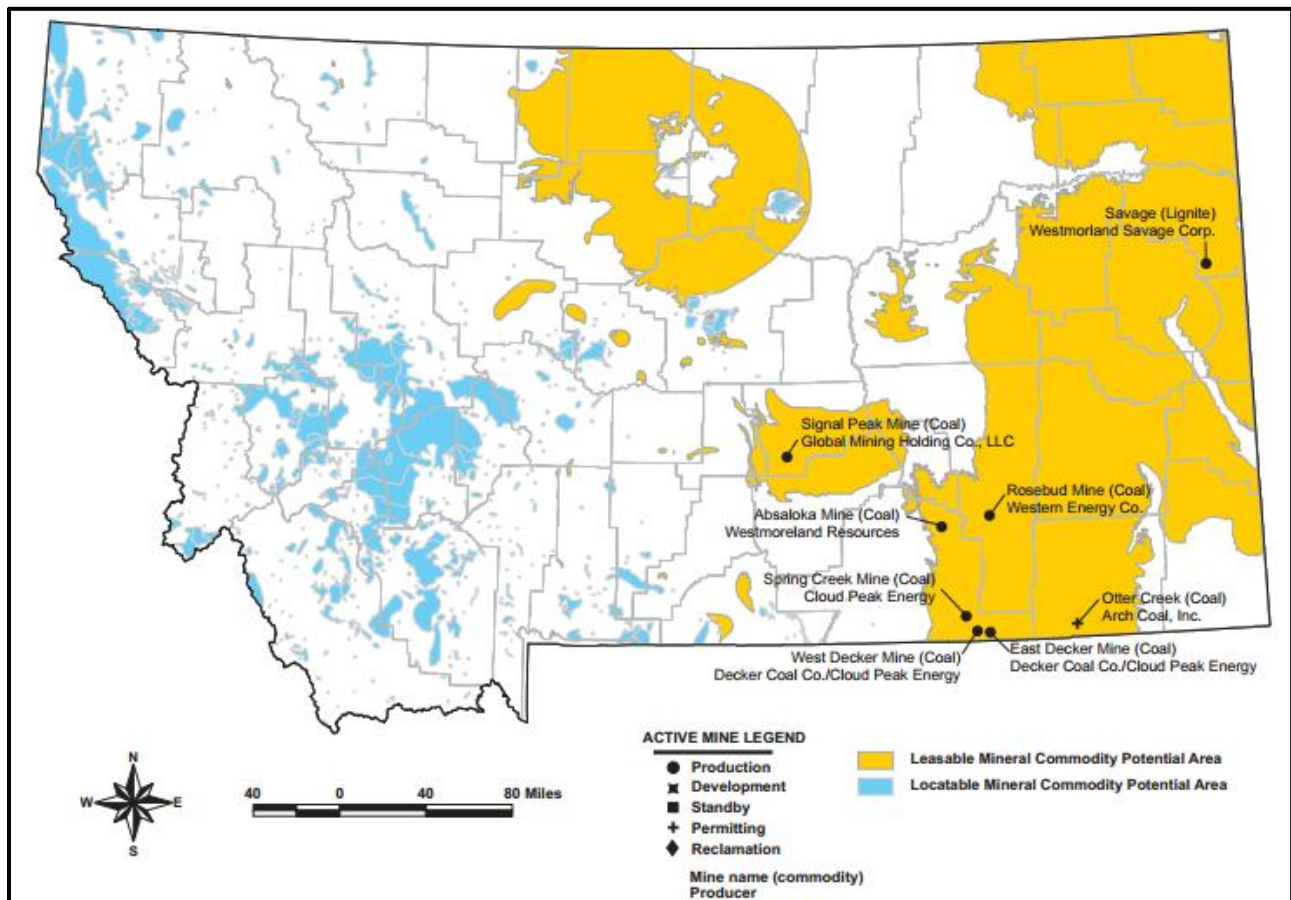


Figure 9: Coal Producing Areas and Coal Mines in Montana
Source: McCulloch, Robin. "Montana Mines and Exploration — 2012"

The southeast corner of Big Horn County is also the single location of the state's existing coalbed methane development. At the time the 2002 growth policy was being prepared, the Bureau of Land Management estimated that initial development in this area could result in 250 producing wells. Between 2002 and 2013, more than 1500 wells had been drilled. At the height of productivity in 2007-2008, there were approximately 900 producing wells but production dropped off significantly in the next four years. Declining prices and requirements for disposing of the by-product water were factors in production decline. In October 2012, there were 332 producing wells. Fidelity Corporation, which at one time owned 90% of all coalbed methane wells in Big Horn County has since sold out and left. (Meredith)

The south part of the county near Soap Creek by Fort Smith has an oil field. (Big Horn County Homeland Security Strategy) There has been a significant amount of oil and gas development in this area in the past ten years. According to the Montana Department of Revenue, the county had 342 active wells in December 2011. (Big Horn County PDM) There is also natural gas production near Hardin.

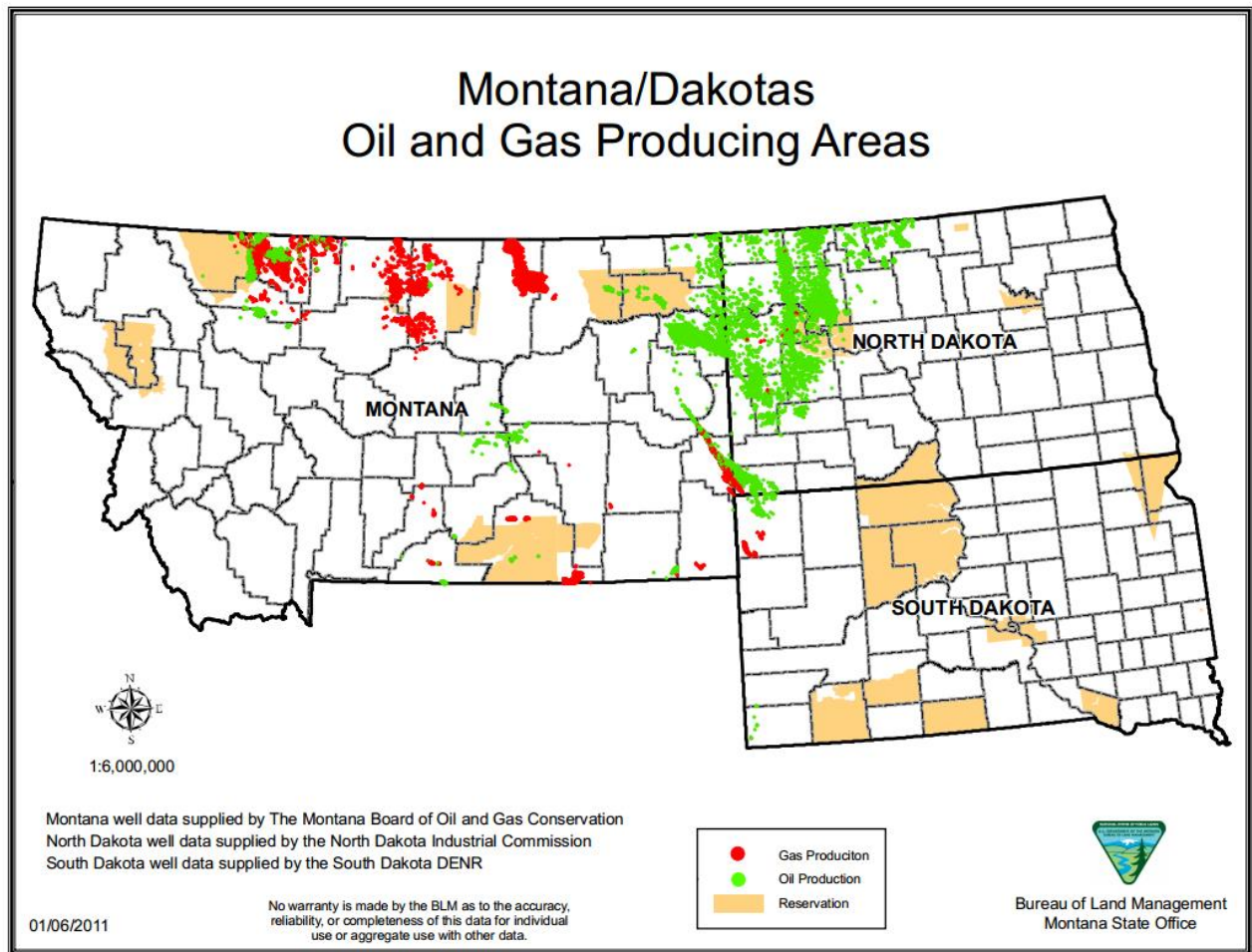


Figure 10: Oil and Gas Producing Areas

Source: [Bureau of Land Management, Montana State Office](#)

There are two major electrical generation facilities in Big Horn County – hydroelectric at Yellowtail Dam and a coal fire power plant near Hardin (completed in 2006). The Yellowtail Dam is located at Ft. Smith. The dam impounds water to create Bighorn Reservoir. The reservoir is situated in both Montana and Wyoming in a deep canyon. The dam also produces electrical power and regulates flows for the fishery in the Big Horn River. The Dam is operated by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

Big Horn County also has many significant historic sites, sites of cultural importance, and sites with religious significance to the Crow and Northern



Cheyenne, and world-class scenery and recreation locations. Big Horn County has the only national monument in Montana – the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. Chief Plenty Coups' home and Rosebud Battlefield, two of the 26 national landmarks in Montana, are located in Montana. The Big Horn Canyon National Recreation Area provides boating and fishing and dramatic landscapes. The Big Horn River north of the dam is a world-class blue-ribbon trout fishery. There are six state fishing access sites along the Big Horn River (<http://fwp.mt.gov/fishing/guide/fasGuide.html>). The Tongue River Reservoir is also a destination for fishing and boating for Montanans and Wyoming residents and other visitors.

Land Ownership

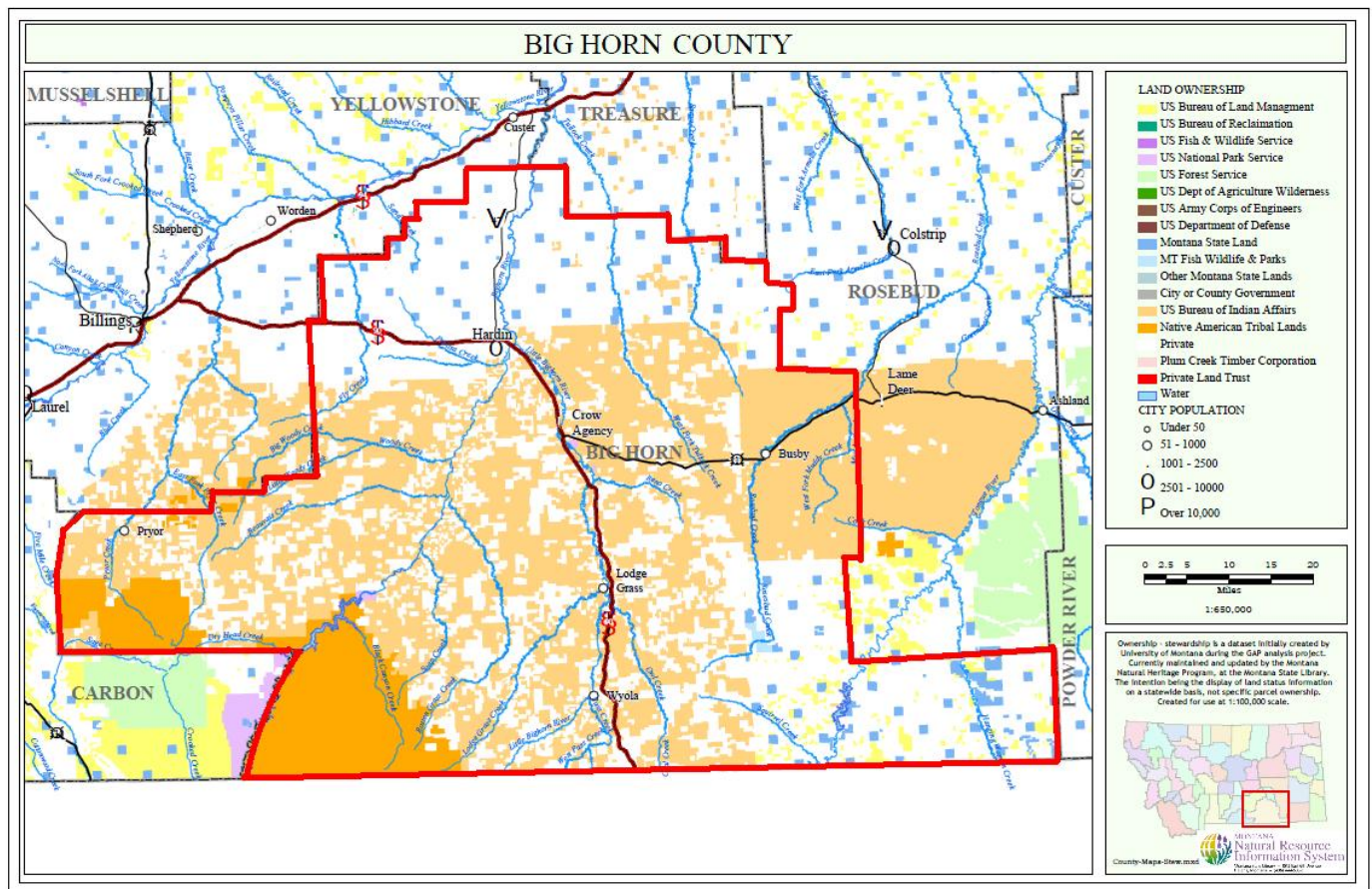


Figure 11: Land Ownership Types in Big Horn County

Source: Montana NRIS <http://nr.is.mt.gov/>

The make-up of land ownership among private landholders, Indian tribal ownership, and local, state, and federal governments has not changed significantly since the 2002 growth policy. Approximately two-thirds of Big Horn County falls within the boundaries of the Crow or Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservations. Nearly all of the Northern Cheyenne Reservation is under the Bureau of Indian Affairs (shown as light orange on the map above), but there are some scattered parcels of privately deeded land (parcels with no color). Much of the Crow Reservation consists of deeded parcels interspersed

with lands managed by the BIA. The Crow have three large parcels under tribal ownership in the southwest corner of the county. There are also some scattered BIA trust lands outside of the Reservation boundaries—in the north part of the county and in the Tongue River Reservoir area in the southeast portion of the county.

The state (blue parcels in the map) has scattered school trust sections throughout the county outside of the Indian Reservations. The state also has Chief Plenty Coups, Rosebud Battlefield, and Tongue River Reservoir State parks, as well as fishing access sites.

The National Park Service manages the federal property of Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Big Horn Canyon National Recreational Area, and Yellowtail Dam. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management manages lands (shown as yellow on the map) located primarily in the southeast portion of the county as well as subsurface mineral rights in the county owned by the federal government.

The county has properties for its facilities, such as the county court house, and also other lands such as the area of the new airport (west of Hardin, within the city-county planning area jurisdiction). The county also has fire suppression facilities located near Decker, Fort Smith, Saint Xavier, Pryor, North Valley (approximately 7 miles north of Hardin), and in Hardin.

Land Use Regulations

Land use regulations in the county planning area consist of subdivision regulations (2006), floodplain regulations (2005), and sanitation (water/wastewater) regulations (1987), all of which are in need of review and update to conform to current state law and best practices. The 2013 legislature resulted in a new law addressing buildings for rent or lease and Big Horn County Commissioners adopted regulations, as required by law, in November 2013. There is no zoning in the Big Horn County planning area, other than a wireless communication facilities ordinance, which needs updating so that it can be more easily understood and enforced. An electrical, plumbing, and/or mechanical permit may be required by the state of Montana for new noncommercial construction and is required for all commercial construction.

Sources:

Big Horn County News. June 27, 2013. "Coal Leasing Agreement Approved by BIA."

www.bighorncountynews.com (click on archives).

Bureau of Land Management, Montana State Office.

http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/mt/blm_programs/energy/oil_and_gas/Par.36589.File.dat/ogproducingareas.pdf

McCulloch, Robin. "Montana Mines and Exploration — 2012" http://www.mbmgt.mtech.edu/gmr/gmr-mines_exploration.asp

Meredith, Elizabeth. Research Hydrologist, Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology. Email Aug 13, 2013.

With data from Montana Board of Oil and Gas Conservation online database:

<http://bogc.dnrc.mt.gov/> accessed Oct. 4, 2012.

Montana Bureau of Mines and Reclamation. <http://www.usbr.gov/gp/mtao/>

Montana NRIS. Montana Natural Resource and Information System. <http://nris.mt.gov/>